

Position Statements
of
Animal Care Services Advisory Board
passed May 16, 2012

Section 823.005 of the Texas Health and Safety Code states that “the governing body of a county or municipality in which an animal shelter is located shall appoint an advisory committee to assist in complying with the requirements of this Chapter. The advisory committee shall be composed of at least one licensed veterinarian, one county or municipal official, one person whose duties include the daily operation of an animal shelter and one representative from an animal welfare organization. The advisory committee shall meet at least three times a year.” Pursuant to Ordinance No. 41165, the City Council of the City of San Antonio (City) created the Animal Control Advisory Board, which is now called the Animal Care Services Advisory Board (Board).

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports the following position statements, to make the San Antonio area a safe place for people and animals to live.

1. Spay/Neuter

Because of indiscriminate and accidental dog and cat breeding, safe, effective and permanent dog and cat birth control is necessary. Spaying female and neutering male animals are the preferred methods of preventing reproduction.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board strongly supports that all dogs and cats, except those who are part of a responsible breeder’s breeding program or where surgical sterilization is contraindicated for medical reasons, be spayed or neutered. Therefore, the Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports the pre-adoption sterilization of all animals leaving Animal Care Services, including early-age sterilization.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board further supports pediatric or “early-age” spay/neuter of animals, i.e., as soon as they reach a minimum of two months of age and two pounds in weight.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board recognizes that sterilization is currently the best method to reduce companion animal overpopulation, and therefore to reduce shelter intake and euthanasia. The most important step a humane community can take to decrease companion animal overpopulation is to make a safe, effective, voluntary spay/neuter program available and readily accessible to the community, and create programs and incentives targeted to the populations known to be contributing disproportionately to shelter intake and euthanasia.

2. Stray Animals

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports the picking up of stray animals (with the exception of feral cats in colonies) especially the packs of dogs roaming the streets.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports increased community responsibility for reduction of the suffering of animals.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports spay/neuter clinics and MASH units, educational outreach through school programs and block walking to distribute information door to door, especially in targeted areas of greatest concentration of strays.

3. Cruelty to animals.

Research has now established that there are strong links between violent behaviors toward humans and violent behaviors toward animals, that abusive behavior toward animals may be an indicator of other forms of violence within the family setting.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board strongly encourages judiciary, law enforcement, and social service agencies to take violence toward animals seriously recognizing that animals are a part of the family unit.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board encourages Child Protective Services, Animal Care Services, and domestic violence organizations: to have interagency cross-training, cross-reporting and referral programs.

4. Standards of Care

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports the standards of care for all agencies/rescues that take animals from Animal Care Services as presented to the Animal Care Services Advisory Board along with reporting criteria with mandated timelines. (See Exhibit A)

5. Training

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports the Animal Care Services Department goal to become a training/sharing destination.

6. Ban of Specific Breeds

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board opposes laws that ban specific breeds of dogs or that discriminate against particular breeds. These laws unfairly discriminate against responsible dog owners based solely on their choice of breed.

7. Dangerous Dogs

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board believes that dog owners should be held responsible for unjustified harm or damage done by their pets. Dangerous dog laws should focus on the behavior of individual dogs and all of the circumstances surrounding an event, including those that may justify a dog's

aggressive actions. Once a dog is deemed dangerous, the court should require the animal's owner to take all of the following actions:

- Evaluation of the dog by a Certified Applied Animal Behaviorist or a board-certified veterinary behaviorist and completion of any training or other treatment as deemed appropriate by that expert
- Spaying or neutering
- Microchipping

8. Enforcement

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports enforcement of current animal ordinances with compassion, realizing it is the owner who is breaking the law by failing to observe City ordinance requirements.

9. Shelter Data

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board strongly believes that Animal Care Services must report consistent, accurate data and transparency in the formulas used to develop appropriate strategies that will effectively show progress or lack thereof of: All Live Intake (including stray, owner relinquish and transfer), Adoptions, Return-to-Owner, Return to Field (for free roaming cats), Transfers, Euthanasia (owner requested and all other), TNR and other Targeted S/N. All data is broken out for dog and cat, and for neonate, juvenile and adult.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board believes that a number of indicators should be tracked to understand progress in decreasing the number of animals at risk. These indicators include: Intake, Length of Stay, Euthanasia Rate and Live Release Rate (LRR), calculated as the percentage of animals who have a live outcome relative to the total intake of animals. Total live outcomes include adoptions, return-to-owner (RTO), and transfers to outside agencies that guarantee adoption. This is crucial to identifying the best care for shelter animals and maximizing the likelihood that they will leave the shelter alive.

10. Euthanasia

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports euthanasia by injection. Euthanasia should not be performed in the presence of live animals, and it is essential that the proper steps are taken by the trained staff to verify that death has occurred. Performed properly, euthanasia by injection is the most humane, safest, fastest and least stressful to the animal and is safe for shelter personnel.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board advocates the use of training and education of the pet-keeping public to reduce the frequency of animal relinquishment, public and private spay and neuter programs to slow the birth rate for animals, active promotion of adoptions of shelter animals, and aggressive policies to discourage excessive breeding of animals.

11. Feral Cats

In order to stabilize and eventually reduce the free-roaming cat population through attrition, the Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports the ongoing responsible management of free-roaming cat colonies through Trap/Neuter/Return and through "Feral Freedom" programs.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board believes that feral cat overpopulation is a community-generated problem and the community has a responsibility to work toward a solution. Animal Care Services should not be expected to devote all the resources needed or shoulder the responsibility alone.

The Animal Care Services Advisory board supports distribution of exclusionary devices and deterrents, and public education regarding the humane management of free-roaming cats.

Recognition by animal control officers and shelter staff that an ear-tipped cat has already been spayed or neutered allows for healthy, unsocialized cats to remain at or to be returned to their origin, rather than be admitted to an Animal Care Services. Animal Care Services should only return cats to their origin if they are receiving adequate food, water and shelter, and if the environment is conducive to successful outdoor living.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board advocates placing well-socialized free-roaming cats and kittens in new homes when feasible. Alley Cat Allies is recognized as the expert organization for Trap/Neuter/Return.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports Animal Care Services partnering with the San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition and various interest groups, with registration of colonies handled by the San Antonio Feral Cat Coalition. Open communication among all interests is advocated.

Subsidized sterilization, public education and outreach, adoption resources, dedicated colony caretakers, and others will help achieve a comprehensive goal.

12. Sale of Pets

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board opposes the sale of dogs and cats through pet stores and other commercial operations.

13. Disasters

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports a comprehensive disaster plan for a wide range of natural disasters, as well as war and terrorism, that place animals in jeopardy.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports a program that will strive to rescue and care for animals trapped in these circumstances, endeavoring to reunite the animals with their owners.

The Animal Care Services Advisory Board supports cooperation between government agencies, city, state, and federal and other animal welfare agencies to save the lives of animals affected by such disasters.

Rescue Guidelines

Passed by ACS Advisory Board on May 16, 2012
Position Statements - as Attachment to Standards of Care

Experienced rescuers rank a dog's overall adoption potential as the most important factor when selecting which dogs they can save out of thousands in need. New rescuers are influenced more by the plight of the dog, putting priority on the immediate need to save its life rather than its suitability for future placement. Those in the worst shape or most danger of death are chosen first. By using that criteria, many rescuers become overloaded with dogs that are quite difficult medically and behaviorally.

They have big hearts, good intentions and a lot of energy but they often have quite a different perspective on how rescue should be done. They're easily led by their emotions and are especially susceptible to the daily barrage of appeals from the Internet of "sweet dog to die tomorrow!" "last day for this dog!" "please help now or this dog will die!"

Emotion plays a large part in rescue work (none of us would be involved if these dogs didn't tug on our heart strings) but emotion as the driving force in a placement program can have significant drawbacks.

In recent years, thanks mostly to the Internet, rescue has grown into a large army of loosely connected volunteers across the country, volunteers of widely different backgrounds and philosophy. The sheer number of volunteers and the speed with which they communicate today makes rescue more effective than ever and a powerful force in reducing shelter deaths.

The bombardment of appeals never lets up and keeps many rescuers in a constant state of emergency, rushing to retrieve dogs and rushing to place them, in a frantic effort to keep pace.

Experienced volunteers know that rescue is about more than saving lives. That's just the easiest part. The most important aspect of rescue is putting that dog into the right home where it will be loved and cared for for the rest of its life. That's the hardest part and the most satisfying. There are no shortcuts to making a good match but the results are well worth the effort.

Intake - Take pictures of the dogs you take in as well as all records including profiles of behavior and medical issues. Evaluate behavior after observation. Keep this recorded also.

Adoption Procedures

1. To thoroughly interview potential adopters utilizing two or more methods (i.e., written application, phone interview, home visit, face-to-face interview) with the goal of placing

Housing - Shall provide for sanitary and safe housing for dogs, and shall provide adequate space appropriate to the age, size, weight, and breed of the dog, and that allows the dog to engage in normal body movements, including the ability to sit, stand up, turn about freely, or lie fully recumbent in a natural position. The primary enclosure shall provide at least partial solid flooring. Nonsolid flooring must be safe for the breed, size, and age of the dog; be free from protruding sharp edges; and be designed so that the paw of the dog is unable to extend through or become caught in the flooring.

Each dog, if housed in a primary enclosure, whether housed alone or with other compatible dogs, shall be provided a minimum amount of space, calculated as:

a. Find the mathematical square of the sum of the length of the dog in inches as measured from the tip of the nose to the base of its tail, plus 6 inches. Divide this product by 144 to calculate the minimum required floor space, in square footage, that must be provided by a primary enclosure.

b. The interior height of a primary enclosure must be at least 6 inches higher than the head of the tallest dog in the enclosure when it is in a normal standing position.

Outdoor Housing: Must provide protection from direct sun rays and from the effects of direct wind and rain.

Noise - Design, construction and management of kennels should be such as to minimize noise levels.

Storage Facilities – Shall be designed and maintained as to provide adequate storage to protect food, medicines, supplies, and bedding from deterioration, contamination, and vermin infestation. Any potentially toxic substance should be stored in a manner to avoid contamination and potential for harm to the dogs.

Structure – Shall be structurally sound, in good repair, have no sharp edges or points that could injure the dog(s), and shall securely contain the dogs while precluding access by other animals. Structural surfaces should be able to be sanitized.

Equipment and Maintenance - leashes, collars, bathing equipment, shampoo, brushes, throw-away or toys that can be disinfected, odor neutralizer, crates, bowls (preferably stainless steel), carriers, cleaning equipment, fans, bedding, etc. must be provided and equipment must be in good working order and clean.

Waste Disposal – All excreta, feces, debris, and food wastes must be removed from enclosures, at least once daily, and from under primary enclosures as often as necessary, to prevent an excessive accumulation of feces and food waste, to prevent soiling of dogs contained in the enclosure, and to reduce disease hazards, insects, pests and odors. Premises must be kept free of accumulations of trash, junk, waste products, and discarded matter. Waste must be handled and disposed of in a manner that poses minimal hazards to dogs and people, and reduces the likelihood of contamination of the soil or ground water with chemicals and/or microorganisms.

Cleaning and Sanitation – Hard surfaces with which the dogs come in contact must be spot-cleaned daily and sanitized at least once every 2 weeks and more often if necessary to prevent accumulation of dirt, debris, food waste, excreta, and other disease hazards. When steam or

Enrichment - Dogs shall be provided some form enrichment, such as sturdy toys or chew sticks, along with visual enrichment, such as visual contact with other dogs or humans, except as necessary for veterinary care or quarantine.

Exercise - the importance of proper exercise cannot be overemphasized. A clean yard should be available for running and walking dogs is essential.

Grooming - Dogs should be kept presentable for adoption by being bathed, combed, and in some cases, properly groomed.

Grouping

- a. Dogs having activity in groups and/or social interaction must be compatible and free of infectious disease.
- b. Any dog exhibiting a vicious or aggressive behavior shall be housed separately, as needed to prevent injury to other dogs. As with quarantine, separation of dogs due to aggression should be accompanied by a program to resolve the underlying causes of this disorder.
- c. Puppies four months of age or younger shall not be housed together in the same primary enclosure with adult dogs other than their dam or foster dam.
- d. If a dog is infected with a contagious disease or condition as determined by a licensed veterinarian, one must house the dog separately from healthy animals, and shall handle the dog in a manner that will minimize the likelihood of contagion. Handlers must wash their hands before and after handling each infected or contagious dog.

Health and Veterinarian Care: Have a veterinarian who will advise the organization. It also helps to set up billing procedures before hand and prove the organization has the ability to pay its bills.

- a. Ensure that necessary routine and preventive veterinary care is provided, including heartworm preventive and flea and tick preventive.
- b. Assess each dog's health and welfare daily; this should include observation of body condition (i.e. appropriate weight, skin/coat/nail condition), behavior, and whether the dog is eating, drinking, urinating, and defecating normally.
- c. Provide prompt treatment of illness or injury under the direction of a licensed veterinarian.
- d. Maintain records of any veterinary care, including records of regular preventive veterinary care.
- e. Ensure that humane euthanasia is performed when necessary and only by a licensed veterinarian, or other certified personnel pursuant to state regulations, using methods cited in the American Veterinary Medical Association's Guidelines on Euthanasia and in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.

Staff - An adequate number of trained staff/volunteers must be provided to ensure appropriate upkeep and so that all minimum care requirements for the dogs can be met. Make sure that all volunteers in your rescue group are educated in their area of service, whether fostering, adoption screening, temperament evaluation, transportation, or educational outreach.

Training - Give your staff/volunteers job descriptions and training on how to interact with the dogs and the knowledge to do their jobs properly to avoid bites.

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